

EXCEPTION REQUEST – PARK PLACE MIDDLE SCHOOL MODERNIZATION CRITICAL AREAS ORDINANCE WETLAND BUFFER REDUCTION

Monroe School District is requesting an Exception to the Critical Areas Ordinance MCC 20.05.080 (D)(1) that requires a minimum 200-foot undisturbed wetland buffer for Category 1 wetlands. The District is requesting the Exception per MCC 20.05.050 (C)(1) which allows for exceptions to the Critical Areas Ordinance by public agencies or utilities. This exception is in association with the Park Place Middle School (PPM) Modernization project.

The PPM project proposes to improve the existing athletic fields with artificial turf, a synthetic track, and lighting. The upgraded fields will be in the same location as the existing fields and will not extend any clearing or grading beyond currently developed areas. At issue is the fact that the current fields are already well within the 200' buffer of an off-site Category 1 Wetland to the south. This portion of the property has been used as athletic fields since the facility was opened as Monroe High School in 1974. The field has been used for both school and community sports, as well as physical education classes. Configuration of the field has remain essentially unchanged since its original construction. The proposed upgraded field locations will overlay the existing fields and will not expand the area of clearing, nor will they impact any existing vegetation on the south edge of the property.

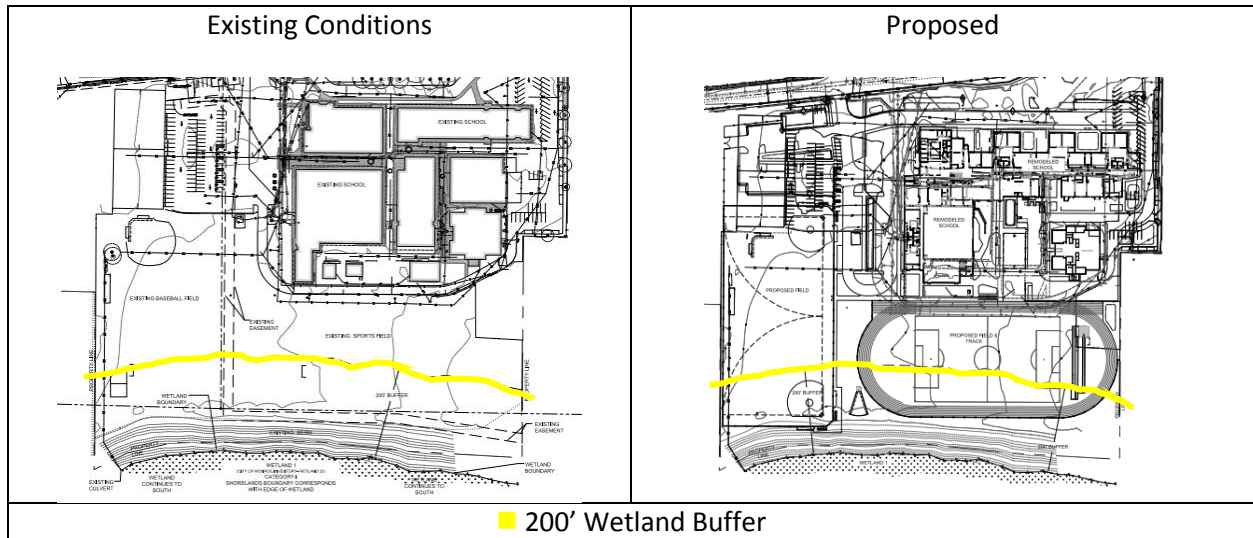
Before the high school was opened in the 70's, the property was operated as Park Place Nursery. Historical photos show that the field area was already cleared for the nursery's use.

1969 Aerial Photo showing cleared area for Park Place Nursery



The entire school parcel is 19.4 acres, which is a small site for serving 850 middle school students. The new school design will optimize the use of the developed north portion of the site with new/remodeled buildings, site circulation, landscaping and approved parking. The only area remaining for athletic field use is the south portion of the property, which includes the 200-foot wetland buffer. There is no other on-site option for moving the fields.

Roughly half of the existing football/soccer fields lie within the wetland buffer. The same condition will occur with the proposed field upgrades – approximately half of the football/soccer field and track will lie within the wetland buffer as well as roughly half of the southern baseball field.



If the District were to re-design the site with no intrusion into the 200-foot wetland buffer, there would be room for only one baseball field with some extra area remaining that would not be large enough for any kind of athletic field. This would not be adequate to serve the physical education needs of the middle school. Additionally, this would impact the community by removing fields that are currently used for after-school and recreational sports.

To mitigate the buffer impacts, the District is proposing to purchase off-site mitigation credits from the Skykomish Mitigation Bank. Refer to the Critical Areas Study for more detailed information.

97,700 sf impacted buffer x 0.2 replacement ratio = 19,540 sf mitigation credits required

19,540 sf mitigation credits x \$4.47 per credit = \$87,344

Health and Fitness is one of the state-mandated Essential Academic Learning Requirements for all students and a Physical Education program is required per RCW 28A.230.040. In order to deliver an effective Physical Education program, it is essential that schools have adequate outdoor athletic fields. Due to the size of the property, there is no other alternative location or configuration for the fields that would avoid the wetland buffer.

The District meets the Exception criteria because:

- The District is a Public Agency;
- The fields are essential to the school's ability to meet state-mandated educational requirements;
- The size of the property prohibits relocating the fields;
- There is no other feasible alternative that would locate the fields outside of the wetland buffer; and
- The proposed purchase of off-site mitigation credits will mitigate impacts to the on-site buffer.